**Capstone Evidence Cover Sheet**

Complete the following form to introduce your capstone project.

Student’s name: Connie Burkett

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**Overview**

**Description of Project:**

The purpose of the action research study was to observe the effects of a child-friendly synthetic phonics program, Letterland, on the academic progress of kindergarten students. The researcher wanted to observe if kindergarten students would learn the letter names and sounds at a faster rate and then be able to apply those skills in order to read and write independently at the expected level for kindergarten students. Twelve students from one kindergarten classroom were included in the study. Data was collected from the beginning of the school through the third nine weeks.

**Summary: (brief summary of findings/impact on schools and students)**

The results of the study did demonstrate that kindergarten students learned their letter names and sounds at a faster rate. All students within the study could produce the letter sounds by the end of the second nine weeks. The majority of the students could recognize the upper and lowercase letters by the end of the second nine weeks. The results also demonstrated that over half of the students were beginning to apply these skills to their reading and writing. Therefore, the Letterland program, did have a positive impact on these kindergarten students.

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| **NCPTS** | **Capstone Project Evidence** |
| **Standard 1:** Teachers demonstrate leadership | Demonstrated through the presentation of the action research project to interested colleagues and principal within the school setting and the collaboration with other teachers seen in journal reflections. |
| **Standard 2:** Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students | This standard was demonstrated in several journal reflections and within the action research paper in the areas of reading and writing. Instruction was differentiated and individual student needs addressed. |
| **Standard 3:** Teachers know the content they teach | Through completion of the literature review, the researcher was provided with content knowledge and information about appropriate phonics instruction. Therefore, knowledge of content was demonstrated through the inclusion of synthetic phonics and the Letterland program within a kindergarten classroom as seen in the implementation plan. |
| **Standard 4:** Teachers facilitate learning for their students | The researcher implemented the K-2 Literacy Assessment, informal running records and writing conference sheets as tools to assist in facilitating the learning for students. The data collected allowed the teacher to tailor instruction to students needs in order to ensure appropriate instruction. |
| **Standard 5:** Teachers reflect on their practice | This standard was demonstrated through journal reflections during the action research process and in the implementation of the Letterland program based on information provided in the literature review. |

The Effects of Incorporating a Child-Friendly Synthetic Phonics Program, Letterland,

in a Kindergarten Classroom

By

Connie Burkett

An Action Research Study Submitted as a

Capstone Project to the

Gardner Webb University School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in Elementary Education

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**Abstract**

The Effects of Incorporating a Child-Friendly Synthetic Phonics Program, Letterland in a Kindergarten Classroom. Burkett, Connie, 2012: Capstone Action Research, Gardner-Webb University, Alphabet/Phonics/Phonemic Awareness/Reading Instruction

This action research project was initiated to determine the effects of incorporating the Letterland phonics program to fidelity and the academic success of kindergarten students.

The kindergarten students were assessed within the first week of school to determine the skills already possessed and develop a baseline for student growth. The Letterland program provided the primary phonics instruction. Students were first introduced to the Letterland program and characters through the Fast Track. Then instruction for individual letter sounds, letter names and skills were provided through the information in the Letterland teacher manual.

Students were assessed periodically throughout the study to determine the growth of each student in the area of letter sounds, letter names, phonemic awareness, reading level and writing skills. The main assessment tool incorporated in the study was the county’s K-2 Literacy Assessment developed based on state guidelines. The researcher also collected data from informal running records, writing conference sheets and an interview with each student.

Based on the data collected, the Letterland program did have a positive impact on the students’ academic success. The majority of the students did learn the letter names and sounds at a faster rate. Also, by the end of the study, February 2012, sixty-six percent of the students were reading on grade level. When writing words in isolation, the scores were higher than when students’ writing samples were observed. Through student interviews the researcher was able to document the student’s enjoyment of the Letterland program, which provides insight into the successfulness of the program.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**Overview**

Teachers are always in a quest to discover the most appropriate method in which to instruct students. How to most effectively teach students to read is probably the most sought after question in education. Finding the answer drives instruction from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The desire for all students to be proficient was the guiding principals of this study. Based on previous data less than 70% of kindergarteners were proficient at the end of the year. The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERRA) published a guide “Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read” for teachers, policy makers and parents in 2001 that made available evidence based reading research. The guide, based on the findings of the National Reading Panel report in 2000, addressed many components of reading instruction. One of the components addressed was the various methods of teaching phonics to young children. There has been much debate over the use of synthetic versus analytic phonics within a kindergarten classroom (Torgesen et. al, 1992 and Wyse & Goswami, 2008)**.** The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of a synthetic phonics program within a kindergarten classroom. Observations will also be made regarding how effective a synthetic phonics program is in preparing kindergarten students to become readers.

**Problem Statement**

The problem was students consistently enter first grade without the

appropriate phonological awareness skills that are necessary in order to begin reading and writing independently. Based on kindergarten grade level expectations as assessed by a county K-2 Literacy Assessment, students do not have adequate knowledge of the letter sounds which is necessary to develop phonemic awareness skills. According to research, phonemic awareness skills, along with recognizing letter sounds, are the foundations to becoming readers and writers (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement [CIERA], 2001). Explicit and systematic instruction proves to be the most effective in preparing students to read and write. There are several approaches and methods to teaching systematic phonics (CIERA, 2001). The two most debated approaches are synthetic and analytic phonics.Research has documented positive and negative aspects to both types of phonics instruction (Torgesen et al., 1992 and Wyse & Goswami, 2008). The researcher within this study sought to discover the effectiveness of incorporating a synthetic phonics approach within a kindergarten classroom.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to incorporate a child friendly synthetic phonics program, Letterland, within a kindergarten classroom. When incorporated to fidelity, the Letterland program should increase the students’ ability to master letter sounds, letter naming and their ability to blend and segment sounds to apply these skills to their reading and writing. The Letterland program has a child friendly manner in which to present the letter sounds, their letter names and stories about various phonemic rules, which encourage the students to learn the skills. The Letterland program is also a synthetic phonics program in which the letter sounds are taught first through a special character whose name provides an example of the sound. The letter sounds are taught in a specific sequence within the Letterland program. In completing this study the researcher hoped the Letterland program would bridge the gap between kindergarten expectations and first grade expectations, therefore, allowing the students to be more prepared and successful with first grade curriculum.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this study is “In what ways will using a child-friendly synthetic phonics program increase kindergarten students’ ability to master letter sounds and letter names, while improving the students’ ability to apply these skills within their reading and writing?”. With this research question being the primary focus of the study, additional secondary questions emerge. How will incorporating the Letterland phonics program within a kindergarten classroom improve the rate kindergarten students learn their letter sounds and letter names? How does incorporating the Letterland program within a kindergarten classroom increase the students’ ability to apply letter sounds to read and write at an expected level for a kindergarten student?

**Description of the Community**

The community served within the study is located in a rural section of the county. The county is located in the foothills region within the state. Based on the 2007 data from the North Carolina Department of Commerce, EDIS database, the county’s population was 153,404. The county’s population consists of 81.1% white, 8% African American, .4% Alaska Native, 2.6% Native Hawaiian, and .1% Pacific Islander, 8.3% Hispanic and 2.1% listing two or more ethnic groups. The high school graduation rate in the county consists of 20.5% with less than a high school diploma, 33.3% high school degree, 20.4% some college, 7.8% associate degree, 13.3% bachelor’s degree and a 4.7% master’s degree (Anonymous, 2011, p.11-12). There is one community college and one university located within the county. There are several universities in close proximity that provide opportunities for completing bachelor and master degrees without traveling outside of the county. The primary source of employment for several decades was furniture and textiles manufacturing, but with the economic decline of our present day situation, that is no longer the case. In 2009 the county reached a twenty-five year all time high in unemployment rate of 15%. However, manufacturing still employs some 20,000 plus individuals, primarily in the area of cable manufacturing (Anonymous, 2011, p.11-12).

The county operates with three separate school systems. One system has approximately 2,802 students, while another has approximately 4,474 students. The largest school system serves approximately 17,407 students within 28 schools. Within this larger school system, where the study took place, there are sixteen elementary schools, five middle schools and seven high schools. Five out of the seven high schools had a typical high school setting. The other two high schools consist of one school for students who have behavioral issues that inhibit them from participating in their home school and the other high school is housed at the community college and provides students an opportunity to receive high school and college credit simultaneously (Anonymous, 2011, p.11-12).

The community surrounding the school is densely populated and representative of middle to lower socioeconomic families. The school is located near one town that consists of a few smaller businesses, three churches, a bank, police station and fire station. The only major store located just outside the town is a Dollar General store. With the largest city 15-20 minutes away, families must travel to work and to purchase groceries and clothing.

**Description of Work Setting**

The setting for this study is in one of the elementary schools. The school is identified as a Title One elementary school within a Title One District. The school itself was located within a rural section of the county. The population within the school is a mixture of upper, middle and lower class families. The school mainly serves students from the lower socioeconomic families. Many of the students come from single parent homes or homes in which only one parent works outside of the home. Therefore, many of the students have not attended a daycare before coming to school. They lack the appropriate social skills and life experiences that would benefit them in the school setting. However, some students are able to attend the Headstart preschool program before coming to school.

The study takes place in a K-6elementary school. Within the school there was also a preschool classroom and two self-contained exceptional children’s classrooms. The school’s population is 500 students with 66% receiving free or reduced lunch. The student population could be broken down into 251 male students and 249 female students. The majority of ethnic groups within the school are Asian, Hispanic, Black, White, and Multi-Racial. Within the school population 360 students are White, 39 students are Black, 71 students are Hispanic, 19 students are multi-racial and 10 students are Asian (Anonymous, 2012). The school consists of a principal and assistant principal, along with three additional office staff, twenty-three teachers, eight teacher assistants, six specialty teachers, four Exceptional Children’s (EC) teachers and two EC assistants, one speech therapist, one English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, and five support staff. There are many services available to the students within this school such as speech, occupational and physical therapy, exceptional children’s services, ESL services, Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG) certified teachers and a reading specialist. All faculty members who serve the students in these areas are certified teachers. Most of the services are provided through a pull-out model. However, there are situations when services are provided through inclusion.

The school was constructed in 2006-2007; therefore, the facilities are new and up to date. Each classroom had four computers and a big screen television. There were two additional computer labs and a mobile lab with 16 laptops. The teachers also have access to Elmos, school pads, I pads, flip cameras, along with various other types of technology. The students have access to various up to date educational computer programs. The Letterland characters, songs, stories and games are available to the students on the computer and can be accessed daily through the classroom computers.

Within the school there are four kindergarten classrooms. Each kindergarten class consists of approximately 18 students. Only 12 of the 18 students, six girls and six boys, were included in the study from one of the kindergarten classes. One student in the class was not included within the study because he came into the classroom already able to read; therefore, he would not benefit from the phonics instruction provided. In addition, two students within the classroom that had been retained and already exposed to the program and two more students who did not begin the year in the classroom were not included in the study. There was one student not included in the study who was mainstreamed half of the day within the kindergarten classroom from the self-contained autistic classroom located at the school. The students within the kindergarten classrooms were clustered together by the principal and the academically gifted teacher for our county based on their academic strengths and needs. The students in the classroom in which the study was conducted were grouped based on areas of concern and low scores on the Speed Dial tool given in June 2011. The majority of the students live with families of low income with approximately 14% having neither parent working outside of the home, 50% having one working adult in the family and 36% having both parents working outside of the home. Within the class there was one student identified in the Exceptional Children’s program. Parental involvement in the classroom was limited.

One of the School Improvement Smart goals for the 2011-2012 school year is that by June 2012 students will increase math proficiency from 83.6% to 88.6% and reading proficiency from 64.2% to 73.4% with all subgroups meeting or exceeding identified adequately yearly progress (AYP) target goals (Anonymous, 2011, p.24). In order to provide data driven instruction to assist in meeting the reading goal, kindergarten through second grade teachers collected data on student achievement with the K-2 Literacy Assessment. Within the literacy assessment, students’ knowledge of letter names and sounds were assessed, along with book and print awareness and phonemic awareness skills. Students reading level could be assessed with the K-2 Literacy Assessment, along with spelling and writing skills.

**Writer’s Role**

The teacher within this study has worked in two of the three school systems in the county and taught in four different elementary schools. The researcher is one of four kindergarten teachers within the elementary school included in the study. The class enrollment was 18 students with only 12 students being included in the study. The classroom consisted of children identified within the Exceptional Children’s program or those identified with special needs. The researcher has taught for 17 years. Twelve of the years have been in the kindergarten setting, while the first four years of teaching were as an Exceptional Children’s teacher. While teaching exceptional children, this researcher served as a pull-out resource teacher for three years and a self-contained teacher for one year. The teacher also has one year of experience with the Birth-Kindergarten area where the teacher served as a More at Four Teacher and began the preschool program at the elementary school. The researcher holds certifications in all three areas: Elementary Education, Exceptional Children and Birth – Kindergarten.

Over the years, the researcher incorporated various phonics programs within the kindergarten classroom. These programs varied from strictly teacher developed letter association activities to direct instruction programs, to very explicit synthetic phonics programs. The researcher observed the strengths and weaknesses of each of these programs. The researcher’s personal experiences and study of each of these phonics programs allowed the researcher to think critically about the most effective approach for kindergarten students to learn pre-reading skills. After attending a reading foundations class last year, the researcher gained a greater understanding of the fundamentals necessary to learn to read and developed knowledge of the sequence of skills children need in order to become readers and strategies to assist those students who have difficulty learning to read. Therefore, based on previous experiences and new knowledge of how reading develops in children, the researcher would like to put into practice a program, Letterland, recommended as having the criteria necessary to develop the skills children need in order to become successful readers.

**Definition of terms**

**Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG):** “Academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experiences or environment” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2012, Academically or Intellectually Gifted, para.4).

**Analytical Phonics:**  “Analyzing letter-sound relationships in previously learned words. Sounds are not produced in isolation” (CIERA, 2001, 13).

**English** **as a Second Language:** A language instruction program established to serve those children whose English is their second language (NCDPI, 2012, English As A Second Language: FAQ, question 7).

**Exceptional Children (EC):** The program that ensures “students with disabilities develop mentally, physically, emotionally, and vocationally through the provision of an appropriate individualized education in the least restrictive environment” (NCDPI, 2012, Exceptional Children, para.1).

**K-2 Literacy Assessment:** A state based assessment tool adapted by the school system in which the study was conducted in used in Kindergarten through second grade to track progress of each student. Students are assessed in letter recognition, letter sounds, phonemic awareness, spelling, reading and writing levels (Anonymous, 2012, Teacher Resources).

**Letterland:** A child friendly phonics program that incorporates a synthetic phonics approach to teaching phonics (Letterland, 2011)

**Phonics:** “It is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language)” (CIERA, 2001, p. 4).

**Phonemic Awareness:** “The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words” (CIERA, 2001, p.4).

**Speed Dial:** An assessment tool that provides standard deviation and percentile cut off points by chronological age for the screening areas of motor, concepts, and language. (Pearson Educations, 2012, DIAL-3 Technical Information)

**Synthetic Phonics:** “A phonics approach that converts letters or letter combinations into sounds, and then teaches the students how to blend the sounds together to form recognizable words” (CIERA, 2001, p.13).

**Title One:** The largest federal educational funding program for schools that “provides funding for high poverty schools to help students who are academically behind or at-risk of being behind” (NCDPI, 2012, No Child Left Behind: for North Carolina Parents with Students Attending Title 1 Schools, p. 2).

**Summary**

The focus of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the child–friendly synthetic phonics, Letterland, within a kindergarten classroom. The goal was to improve the kindergarten student’s academic ability, so that they would be better equipped to read and write. The desire was to close the gaps that exist between kindergarten and first grade through incorporating a phonics program that would not only excite the students to learn but would also make learning meaningful for the students.

**Chapter 2: Study of the Problem/Literature Review**

**Overview**

There has been much debate surrounding how to effectively teach young children to read. Appropriate phonics instruction is at the center of the debate. Educators are continually searching for which method of phonics instruction is most effective in teaching children to read. Analytic and synthetic phonics are two differing methods of teaching phonics. Research has documented positives and negatives to both types of phonics programs (Torgesen et al., 1992& Wyse & Goswami, 2008). The purpose of this study is to focus on the effects of a synthetic phonics program within a kindergarten classroom. Within this chapter, the problem will be discussed, along with a review of the literature into various methods of teaching children how to read, a causative analysis and a brief summary.

**Problem Documentation**

The problem was students consistently enter first grade without the appropriate phonetic and phonemic awareness skills to be successful as documented in the K-2 Literacy Assessment and in their reading and writing levels. In the area of reading, the School Improvement Plan (2011) documented that during the 2008-2009 school year, only 63% of the kindergarteners were on or above grade level at the end of the year. The 2009-2010 school year documented 87% of kindergarten students on or above expected grade level. While at the end of the 2010-2011 school year, only 69.4% of kindergarteners were on or above grade level expectations. Overall these figures were alarming. Less than 70% of students accomplished kindergarten at grade level expectations. Educators know that every year a student remains below expectations it becomes more and more difficult to “catch up”. Students who are unable to read and write become frustrated with school and they suffer from low self-esteem.

In 1997, Congress charged the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the Secretary of Education with convening a panel to explore the most current research available that focused on teaching children to read. The panel began with some basic questions. “Does instruction in phonemic awareness improve reading? If so, how is this instruction best provided?” (National Reading Panel [NRP], 1999, p.3). Within the NRP progress report (1999), the panel discovered that there was a direct correlation between “phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first 2 years of instruction” (p. 7). This was apparent when one looked at the beginning of the year K-2 Literacy Assessment (see Appendix A) for the students included in this study. At the beginning of the year the students are asked to name upper and lower case letters and letter sounds. The following graphs represent the data collected at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. More than fifty percent of the students within the study began kindergarten with some knowledge of letter recognition while all the students included in the study began kindergarten with very little knowledge of letter sounds.



Figure 2.1. This graph represents the number of students in a particular percentile range as based on data collected the first week of school with the Letter/Sound section of the K-2 Literacy Assessment. The percentile range is based on how many upper and lower case letters were named correctly. Therefore, the total raw score would be fifty-two. The percentile ranges are as follows: Raw score of 39-52 would be in the 75%-100% range, a raw score of 26-38 would be in the 50%-74% range, a raw score of 13-25 would be within the 25%-49% range and a raw score of 0-12 would be within the 0%-24% range.



Figure 2.2. The graph represents the number of students in a particular percentile range based on the number of letter sounds they were able to produce as documented with the K-2 Literacy Assessment the first week of school. Based on the data, the graph shows that all twelve students had a raw score between 0 – 6 to fall within the 0%-24% range.

Over the years, many different phonics programs have been incorporated within kindergarten classrooms. Each program had characteristics that would be advantageous to the students. However, each of these phonics programs although successful for some students have left other students behind and unprepared for learning to read. The goal was to discover a phonics program that was beneficial to the students, taught phonemic awareness skills and closes the gap between those students who are unprepared to read thus better preparing kindergarten students to become readers. An additional goal was to discover a program that was able to accomplish these goals in a fun and exciting environment for the teacher and students.

**Literature Review**

Throughout the history of education there has been a great deal of focus placed on how to teach students to read. Educators constantly strive to discover the perfect method to employ when teaching reading. Many feel this constant struggle to develop the perfect manner in which to teach reading has eluded the teaching profession. There are continuous debates into the “correct” method employed within the classroom. The two most significant methods in teaching reading are whole language and phonics instruction. Both whole language and phonics instruction can be proven through research to be effective and positive in teaching reading to our students. However, there are advantages and disadvantages on both sides of the debate.

Whole language can simply be defined as integrating interesting and comprehensible texts within the classroom (Krashen, 2002, p. 32). Within a whole language classroom, students acquire language through a child-centered approach rather than learning through direct teaching. Learning, therefore, becomes integrated instead of fragmented. The students learn through interacting with the text instead of passively listening to the teacher (Brooks & Brooks, 2005, p.271). The role of the teacher becomes that of a guide. The teacher guides the students through the text with activities that focus on “questioning, problem-solving, listening, writing, drawing, dramatizing, reading, and orally responding”(Brooks & Brooks, 2005, p.272). Vocabulary, spelling, and grammar are taught within the context of the text being read (Brooks & Brooks, 2005, p. 272). The goal of whole language instruction is to instill within the students a love of literature and the ability to problem-solve and think critically about the text. (Krashen, 2002, p. 32).

Advocates for whole language feel there are many advantages to this approach. The first advantage of whole language is students are not taught isolated skills, but the skills that are taught are embedded within the text. Brooks and Brooks (2005) stated, “By incorporating phonics, vocabulary and grammar skills into holistic learning events, whole language instructors act to facilitate success in students’ growth and overall achievement in reading”. The interconnectedness of the text with skills promotes meaningful learning for the students. A second advantage is that the whole language method does not require students to memorize and learn various rules for phonics, especially when the phonics rules do not apply to a large percentage of the words within our English language (Krashen, 2002, p. 34). Some whole language advocates feel “phonics is not a method of teaching reading, but is an essential ingredient of reading instruction” (Brooks & Brooks, 2005, p. 273). Krashen (2002) stated that “we very rarely see are those who never learn to read despite the availability of comprehensible and interesting print”. However, on the other hand, there has been research to support that some students have not learned to read through incorporating phonics instruction within the classroom. Another advantage of whole language is it encourages a love of reading within the students. Students seem to enjoy reading not only for the simple pleasure it brings, but they enjoy reading for the ideas gained and they can understand and reflect on complex literature (Ediger, 1999, p. 1). At the core of the success in whole language is the amount of real reading completed by the students. Some advocates of whole language would argue that our goal in teaching reading is to encourage a love of reading. There has been a “positive correlation between the amount of time spent in reading activities and scores on reading test” (Krashen, 2002, p. 38).

The success of a whole language program does depend on the reading material available to the students. In a separate article, Krashen (2002) discussed the true reasons behind the “Great Plummet” of whole language within the California schools. In 1987 California schools took hold of a whole language approach to reading. The goal was for language arts instruction to be literature based. However, when the whole language concepts were implemented within classrooms, fourth graders’ scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) declined in reading (Krashen, 2002, p. 749). When all testing data was reviewed and interpreted, the reading scores of the fourth graders had started to decline before the implementation of whole language. The reason for the decline was the print poor environment available to the children. At this time California “ranked last in the country in the quality of school libraries and near the bottom in public libraries. In addition many of the children had very little reading material at home.” (Krashen, 2002, p. 749). Many of the children lived in poverty and had less than 25 books to read at home. A study conducted by Jeff McQuillan discovered a “correlation of .85 between measures of print access (books and other forms of print available in the home, school and community) and the 1994 NAEP scores” (Krashen, 2002, p. 749). Therefore, Krashen(2002) stated that the more access to books that students have, the more they will read and children with more books at home read more. In his review of the research literature, Krashen(2002) discovered that students who read for pleasure gained as much or more than comparison students on test of reading comprehension. Students in whole language classes performed better on test of reading comprehension than those students in skilled based phonics classrooms (Krashen, 2002, p.730). Therefore, it can be concluded that the accessibility to more books encourages more reading which in turn results in greater literacy development of the students.

On the other side of the debate in reading instruction is that of skilled based phonics instruction. Much of the emphasis and support of phonics instruction has developed since the National Reading Panel (NRP) report in 2000. Within the CIERA publication (2001), it was stated “phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language (p12). The goal of phonics instruction is to assist children in learning and using the principals of the alphabet. Children must have “the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds” (CIERA, 2001, p. 12). The National Reading Panel report based on scientific research encouraged and supported the use of explicit, systematic phonics programs within the classroom to teach reading to students (CIERA, 2001, p. 13). Many educators have asked the question, “What is explicit, systematic phonics instruction?” In response to the National Reading Panel report the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) developed a guide for educators entitled “Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read” (CIERA, 2001). Within this guide systematic phonics instruction is defined as “the direct teaching of a set of letter-sound relationships in a clearly defined sequence. This set includes the major sound/spelling relationships of both consonants and vowels” (CIERA, 2001, p. 13). Villaume and Greene (2003) define explicit as the “precise, fully, develop, clearly expressed instructions” (p. 479). They also define systematic as the “orderly progression for introducing letter-sound correspondences” (p. 481). Explicit and systematic instruction is even more simplified by Mesmer and Griffith (2005/2006). They refer to explicit as the lesson delivery and systematic as extending across a period of time. Systematic instruction contains the scope and sequence. Within their study, Mesmer and Griffith (2005/2006) discovered that teachers felt that explicit, systematic phonics instruction was “characterized by direct teaching, high level student engagement and individual accountability” (p. 373).

In the guide “Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read” (2001), there are several benefits to systematic and explicit phonics instruction. These benefits are:

-improves kindergarten and first-grade children’s word recognition and spelling

-improves children’s reading comprehension

-effective for children from various and economic levels

-particularly beneficial for children who are having difficulty learning to read and who are at risk for developing future reading problems

-most effective when introduced early (CIERA, 2001, p. 14 &15)

With all these benefits, the authors from CIERA (2001) stated that phonics instruction should not be a classroom teacher’s entire reading program. Students need to be read to and be reading in texts themselves, both out loud and silently and writing letters, words and stories (CIERA, 2001, p. 15). Villaume and Brabham (2003) state “that phonics instruction is an essential component in beginning reading instruction” (p.479). Basically, the main goal of phonics instruction is to provide a framework for students to develop the alphabetic principles through phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is defined as “the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words” (CIERA, 2001, p. 10). The “Put Reading First” guide explains the importance of phonemic awareness (CIERA, 2001). It states that phonemic awareness improves children’s word reading and reading comprehension. In order “for children to understand what they read, they must be able to read words rapidly and accurately. Rapid and accurate word reading frees children to focus their attention on the meaning of what they read” (CIERA, 2001, p.6). Phonemic awareness also helps children learn to spell and relate sounds to letters as they spell (CIERA, 2001, p.6). “Phonemic awareness is most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes by using the letters of the alphabet” (CIERA, 2001, p.7). Children begin to see how “learning to blend phonemes with letters helps children read words and learning to segment sounds with letters helps them spell words” (CIERA, 2001, p.7). Phonemic awareness is also effective when instruction focuses on only one or two phoneme manipulations (CIERA, 2001, p.10).

The “Put Reading First” guide lists and discusses several different types of approaches to phonics instruction: synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, and analogy-based phonics, phonics through spelling, embedded phonics, and onset-rime phonics instruction (CIERA, 2001, p. 13). Synthetic phonics involves going from part to whole, while analytic phonics involves the whole to part (Wyse & Goswami, 2008, p.700). The interpretation for the classroom teacher is that synthetic phonics “focuses on teaching children individual letter-sound correspondences that they can blend together to form words” (Gray, Ferguson, Behan, Dunbar, Dunn, and Mitchell, 2007, p. 19). The “Put Reading First” guide describes synthetic phonics as “children learn how to convert letters or letter combinations into sounds, and then how to blend the sounds together to form recognizable words” (CIERA, 2001, p.13). Analytic phonics on the other hand “encourages children to look at whole words and identify the particular phonic element being taught. Thus, within an analytical phonics program children might be asked to identify what the words *pen, park, and push* have in common (Gray et. al, 2007, p. 19).

Analytic phonics is described as children learning to analyze letter-sound relationships in previously learned words. They do not pronounce sounds in isolation (CIERA, 2001, p.13). Children within an analytic phonics program focus on a particular skill that allows them to identify how words are the same. This can be through focusing on beginning sounds, ending sounds, or individual sounds within a word or rhyming parts (Comaskey and Savage, 2009 and Torgesen et. al, 1992).

On the other hand, children receiving instruction in synthetic phonics programs learn the individual sounds of each letter and letter combination and use this knowledge to blend and segment phonemes (CIERA, 2001). Within the Reading Panel Progress Report (1999) “systematic synthetic phonics instruction had a positive and significant effect on disabled readers’ reading skills” (NRP, 1999, p.9). The report went on to state that “systematic synthetic phonics instruction was significantly more effective in improving low socioeconomic status children’s alphabetic knowledge and word reading skills than instructional approaches that were less focused on these initial reading skills” (NRP, 1999, p.9). The National Reading Panel Progress Report (1999) referenced that it is most important to have young children make use of letter sounds by blending the sound in order to decode words, while also segmenting sounds in order to use the skills within their writing.

There have been several studies that researched the effectiveness of analytic phonics versus synthetic phonics within the classroom. Since either phonics programs are the first step in reading development, most of the studies have been carried out within kindergarten classrooms. One of the first studies of this kind was completed by Torgesen et. al in 1992. Based on the research findings from studies already completed Torgesen et. al (1992) chose to have three comparison groups. The first group, AB, were given instruction in both analysis and synthesis skills. The second group, B, was just given synthesis skill training and group C was the control group and was provided with language experience. An analysis only group was not included because research completed by Fox and Routh (1984) had already demonstrated that analysis only skills did not improve performance (Torgesen et al., 1992). Within their study Torgesen et al. (1992), the AB group training included activities that encouraged them to blend and segment words. Group B training included activities that involved identifying words after being given individual sounds or phonemes. Group C was involved in reading activities that presented books as enjoyable and meaningful. The reading of the books did include discussion of important facts of the stories and shared experiences. The results found that group AB did significantly better than group C in blending and segmenting words. Group B was more proficient in blending than group C. There was no difference among the groups in rate of learning letter-sound correspondence. However, group AB did learn new words at a faster rate, needed fewer trials to reach mastery and made fewer mistakes within the trials than the other two groups. Therefore, the researchers concluded that “exposure to both kinds of tasks appear to provide a richer awareness of the phonological structure of words, one that is more easily accessible when faced with the challenge of learning to read new words (Torgesen, 2001, p. 369).

A similar study based on these findings was completed by Comaskey, Savage, and Phillips (2009) which researched the impact of analytic and synthetic computer based program on student success in learning beginning reading skills. The prediction was that the group receiving the synthetic instruction would be superior in reading of nonsense words. Both groups followed the same lesson structure. Each lesson began with an animated animal and was followed by a core activity. The results showed that the group receiving the synthetic phonics instruction scored better in blending and segmenting tasks and were superior in identifying final consonant and decoding nonsense words. The analytic group only partially out scored the synthetic group in rhyme articulation tasks. However, the results did demonstrate that both groups read at comparable levels and both groups were able to recall similar sight word. Therefore, the study demonstrated that these two phonics approaches provide different advantages in acquiring particular pre-reading skills, but these “qualitative phonological differences do not immediately translate into qualitative differences in the way that children approach word reading or decoding tasks in Kindergarten” (Cosasky, Savage, & Abrami, 2009, p. 105). Wyse and Goswami (2008) discovered the same conclusions from various studies in their report. In reference to analytic versus synthetic phonics it was stated “no one method of teaching phonics to children learning to read in English appears to be superior to any other method” (Wyse & Goswami, 2008, p. 701).

Letterland is one type of phonics program that operates under the umbrella of synthetic phonics. The program is multi-sensory and stress phonemic awareness skills, blending and segmenting words (Letterland, 2011). In Letterland, each letter is represented by a character whose name exemplifies the letter’s sound. There are stories that relate the sound to the character, songs, and action tricks that encourage and assist the students to not only learn the sounds and letter names but enjoy learning as it takes place (Letterland, 2011). Embedded in each Letterland lesson are activities that require the students to manipulate sounds in various ways (Carter, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of the research was to discover the effects of using a synthetic phonics program, Letterland, with kindergarten students. Also, would incorporating this synthetic phonics program, Letterland, increase the kindergarten students’ ability to master letter sounds, letter naming and their ability to blend and segment sounds to apply these skills within their reading and writing?

**Causative Analysis**

The inability of our nation’s students to read successfully spurred Congress in

1997 to create a panel of experts to review the most recent research in the area of reading. The goal was to discover the most effective method of teaching young children to read, and to provide the information to educators to improve the reading instruction within our nation’s classrooms (NRP, 1999). The research on phonics instruction and developing phonemic awareness skills stressed the importance of students being able to manipulate sounds in order to develop the ability to read (NRP, 1999). Students must have a firm understanding of how to blend and segment sounds to apply these skills to their reading and writing (NRP, 1999). It became apparent that when the students come to kindergarten without any knowledge of letter sounds that the classroom teacher must start at the very beginning. Kindergarten teachers must educate the students about individual letter sounds, along with the importance of letter sounds and how to manipulate letter sounds. Since it is important that students learn the letter sounds and develop the ability to manipulate the sounds, the instruction must take place in an appropriate manner. Based on information gathered in the “Put Reading First” guide (CIERA, 2001) and NRP (1999), phonics instruction must be explicit and systematic in nature or children will lack the necessary skills to learn to read. Letter names and sounds must be taught in an explicit, systematic manner and those skills must be intertwined with developing phonological awareness skills in order for the students to master the ability to blend and segment sounds independently by the end of kindergarten (CIERA, 2001).

Another problem that exists within phonics instruction was discovering a method in which to teach phonemic awareness skills in an interesting and motivating manner for students and teachers. Phonics programs that were able to excite and ignite a student’s interest into learning were far more successful than those that did not. Learning these skills must have meaning for the students, so they will begin to learn the letter sounds and develop the ability to manipulate and employ the sounds within their reading and writing. Kindergarten students needed to not only have exposure to the skills, but they also needed to have the desire to learn and an understanding of the skills in order to apply them when reading and writing.

**Summary**

The problem of preparing our children to read exists within our classrooms today. Finding the correct approach to teach phonics instruction and phonemic awareness skills to our younger students is a problem faced by most classrooms. The National Reading Panel (1999) suggests that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is an essential component to reading instruction. Within the “Progress Report” (NRP, 1999) it was mentioned that systematic synthetic phonics programs were the most effective manner in which to teach phonemic awareness skills, especially to those students who are struggling and are from lower socioeconomic families. With this information in mind, the purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of one synthetic phonics program, Letterland, in preparing kindergarten students to read and write.

**Chapter 3: Expected Outcomes and Procedures for Data Analysis**

**Overview**

Teachers are constantly seeking the most effective method to teach young children to read and write. Many educational professionals and researchers feel that the most appropriate method begins with phonics instruction. Phonics instruction that is explicit and systematic in nature has proven to be the most effective (CIERA, 2001). With this knowledge debates occur regarding the effectiveness of various types of phonics approaches.

This study focused on one such phonetic approach, synthetic phonics, and the effectiveness of synthetic phonics within a kindergarten classroom. The goal of this study was to implement a phonics program within a kindergarten classroom that encouraged not only understanding and knowledge of individual letters and sounds, but also developed an understanding of phonological awareness skills and how to incorporate these skills into reading and writing. The expectation was for kindergarten students to develop an understanding of letter sounds, to manipulate and to blend the sounds in order to read simple words and segment sounds in order to write about a topic. The overall outcome was for the students to leave kindergarten with not just a firm understanding of letters and sounds, but how to use the sounds to begin to read and write independently. Within this chapter, there will be a discussion of the design of the study, followed by a statement of the research questions, detailed discussion of the methodology, including the participants, instruments, and procedures and a summary of this chapter.

**Design of study**

This study was an action research study completed within a kindergarten classroom and implemented by the researcher. The researcher obtained permission to complete the study from university and school system (see Appendix B). The goal of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the county wide synthetic phonics program, Letterland, in preparing kindergarten students to meet grade level expectations as determined by the K-2 Literacy Assessment. The results of the study are based on formal and informal assessments, classroom and observational data, as well as interviews with the students.

One of the issues or limitations that the researcher encountered and had no control over in this study was student absences. Student absenteeism could be a contributing factor for a child not being successful with the Letterland program instead of the program itself. Parental involvement was another factor that the researcher had no control over and could affect whether the Letterland program was successful for a particular student. Parental encouragement and assistance at home could have a positive impact on student achievement. Student absenteeism and parental involvement were not documented in the study; therefore, it was difficult to calculate the effects of each on overall student achievement. However, based on the data collected during the study, overall success of the class as a whole can be determined. Finally, data was collected using the data systems already established and in place at the individual school. The primary method for collecting data was through the use of the K-2 Literacy Assessment. The skills assessed demonstrated the child’s academic success and growth for letter naming, letter sounds, and phonemic awareness.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this study was “In what ways will using a child-friendly synthetic phonics program increase kindergarten students’ ability to master letter sounds and letter names, while improving the students’ ability to apply these skills within their reading and writing?”. With this research question being the primary focus of the study, additional secondary questions emerged. How will incorporating the Letterland phonics program within a kindergarten classroom improve the rate kindergarten students learn their letter sounds and letter names? How does incorporating the Letterland program within a kindergarten classroom increase the students’ ability to apply letter sounds to read and write at an expected level for a kindergarten student?

**Methodology**

**Participants.** The participants within this study were children enrolled in a kindergarten classroom for the 2011-2012 school year. Administrative and parental permission was granted for each participant in the study (see Appendix B). Class gender was fairly evenly distributed with girls and boys. There were twelve students within the kindergarten class participating within the study. The students were clustered together by the principal and the academically gifted teacher for the county based on the students low Speed Dial scores from the kindergarten screening given in June 2011. Sixty-six percent of the students within this classroom scored at 49% or below on the Speed Dial assessment tool, while 34% scored 50% or above on the Speed Dial when compared to age equivalent norms. Therefore, this classroom was grouped with the majority of the students who had lower Speed Dial scores and possible at-risk of struggling in school. Students qualifying for the Exceptional Children’s program were also placed in this classroom. There was one student within the class that received Exceptional Children’s services for developmental delays that was included within the study.

Ten of the twelve students attended some type of preschool setting the year before entering kindergarten. The majority of the students were from low income families, with approximately 67% having one working adult in the family and 8% having no adults working outside the home. Forty-two percent were from single parent homes, while 58% were from two parent homes.

**Instruments.** There were four sources/instruments used to collect data needed in order to measure each expected outcome. The first source of data was the county’s K-2 Literacy Assessment. This assessment was developed by the county reading specialists as an assessment tool for the K-2 teachers based on the state’s guidelines for a K-2 assessment. This assessment was used with the students as a formative assessment tool and also as a universal assessment tool for all students three times a year. Not all portions are given to the students each time they are assessed. The literacy assessment included various sections. For this study, data was collected from the upper and lower case letter recognition, letter sounds portion, phonemic awareness, spelling and reading level (see Appendix A). The data collected from August to February was included within the study. The students were assessed within the first month of school on upper and lowercase letter recognition and letter sounds. This data provided the baseline data for the study. The end of the second quarter all students were assessed on letter recognition, phonemic awareness and reading level. Spelling was assessed in February before the completion of the study.

Beginning in January, the teacher began to keep informal running records on the students that were beginning to read independently. The running records provided the teacher with another means to collect data on the student’s reading progress. Data from the informal running records was collected once a week. The majority of running records were completed on books read within a small group. Most of the books read within the small group were comparable in difficulty as those leveled readers included within the K-2 literacy assessment. There was not a written form to track the running record. A blank piece of paper with the child’s name, date and book title at the top of the page was used by the teacher. Then the teacher would place a check mark on the page for each word read correctly or wrote notes about misread words.

Another method of data collection was conference notes collected during the students’ independent writing time. Beginning the second nine weeks, after the students had some background knowledge on the writing process and techniques, data was collected from the students writing samples. The conference sheet was developed by the researcher (see Appendix C) to assist in providing documentation of each student’s writing skills and level. The teacher or assistant documented what was discussed during the conference. For example, strengths and weaknesses of each student’s writings were documented. The form was completed as the teacher or assistant conferenced with each student. Each student had a conference at least once a week. The number of times a student had a conference depended on how quickly they completed a story.

Finally, the students were given a survey developed by the researcher

(see Appendix D) about their interest in the Letterland phonics program that was employed during the 2011-2012 school year. The purpose of the survey was to establish what interested the students the most about the Letterland program. Students were asked by the teacher, “What do you like the best about Letterland?” The teacher recorded each student’s answer.

**Procedures.** The Letterland program begins with an introduction to the characters (all lower case letters), their sound, 3 words that begin with that sound and action trick. This introductory program is called Fast Track. Each day two Letterland characters are introduced, along with their sounds, words, and action trick that assist the students in remembering the letter. The rationale behind the Fast Track is the students will be provided with a quick glimpse of each of the 26 lowercase letters and three alliterative words for each letter. The Fast Track also hopes to familiarize the students with the alphabet sequence, build awareness of phonemes and replace any confusion that is created by the letter name.

After the Fast Track is complete, the Letterland program goes back and introduces each character and sound in more detail. The teacher simply needs to follow the directions to fidelity given in the teacher’s manual. Each lesson begins with a quick review by either the quick dash or guess who. Quick dash is when the students, as a group, quickly go through the Letterland cards and say the sound of each character. Guess Who is a game in which the teacher makes a letter sound and the students guess which Letterland character makes the sound. Then the lessons continue with discussion of the Letterland character. Each lesson also includes a phonemic awareness and language development activity, along with small group and independent activities. One activity that encouraged the students to practice manipulating sounds was completed as a whole group or in the small reading groups. Students were given dry erase boards, markers and erasers. The words were called out and the students manipulated the sounds to write the correct word. There was also a Letterland program installed on the classroom computers, which enabled the teacher to play the Letterland character’s song, allowed the students to listen to the character’s story, and listen to the handwriting song.

Week One – Begin Letterland Fast Track(Lessons 1-3). Introduce Annie Apple, Bouncy Ben, Clever Cat, Dippy Duck, Eddie Elephant and Firefighter Fred. Assessment– Begin alphabet portion for K-2 Literacy Assessment.

Week Two – Continue Letterland Fast Track (Lessons 4 -7). Introduce Eddie Elephant, Fire Fighter, Golden Girl, Harry Hatman, Ippy Ink and Jumpy Jim, and had a review lesson. Assessment - Continue alphabet portion for K-2 Literacy Assessment.

Week Three – Continue Letterland Fast Track (Lessons 8 – 12). Introduce Kicking King, Lucy Lamplight, Munchy Mike, Noisy Nick, Oscar Orange, Peter Puppy, Quarrelsome Queen, Red Robot, Sammy Snake and Talking Tess.

Week Four – Continue Letterland Fast Track (Lessons 13- 18) and alphabet activities. Introduce Uppy Umbrella, Vickie Violet, Walter Walrus, Fix – It Max, Yellow Yo-Yo Man and Zig Zag Zebra and a review lesson.

Week Five – Begin section 2 – a-z word building (Lessons 19 and 20). A whole week was taken for the letter, Cc and Clever Cat. The first lessons were broken down into two days for each lesson and were supplemented with books that spoke of the letter and also continued overall alphabet recognition activities.

Week Six– (Letterland Lessons 21-25) These lessons introduce Annie Apple (Lesson 21 and 22), and then c and a are reviewed in lesson 23. Lessons 24 and 25 introduce Mr. Apron Man and the long sound of a.

Week Seven– (Letterland Lesson 26 and 27) Again the lessons were broken down into two days. The letter for these lessons was Dd and Dippy Duck.

Week Eight – (Letterland Lesson 28-30) The letter discussed was Hh and Harry Hatman. Lesson 30 is a review of d and h. Assessment - Began updating K-2 literacy assessment and collecting student data on growth.

Week Nine - (Letterland Lessons 31 and 32) The letter discussed was Mm and Munching Mike. Assessment - Continue updating K-2 literacy assessment and collecting student data on growth.

Week Ten – (Letterland Lessons 33-36) The focus was on Talking Tess and the letter and sound of Tt. Lesson 35 reviews m and t, while lesson 36 was the first lesson on how to begin to blend sounds.

Week Eleven **-** (Letterland Lessons 37- 39) The letter for the week was Ss and Sammy Snake. Lesson 37 and 38 introduced Sammy Snake and lesson 39 discusses plurals with Sammy Snake.

Week Twelve **– (**Letterland Lessons 40 – 42) Continued to focus on Sammy Snake. Lesson 40 talked about Sleepy Sammy, Lesson 41 discussed Sally Snake and Lesson 42 focused on segmenting words.

Week Thirteen– (Letterland Lessons 43-46) These lessons continued with a discussion of Impy Ink and the letter and sound for Ii in lessons 43 and 44. Then lesson 45 and 46 focused on Mr. Ice Cream man and the long sound of Ii. Began to collect data on writing with writing conference sheets

Week Fourteen– (Letterland Lessons 47-49) Noisy Nick and the letter sound of Nn were introduced in lessons 47 and 48. Lesson 49 was a review of n and i.

Week Fifteen – (Letterland Lessons 50-52) The letter Gg and sound were introduced, along with Golden Girl in lessons 50 and 51. Lesson 52 focused on segmenting through live spelling and slow-speak dictation.

Week Sixteen – (Letterland Lessons 53 – 56) These lessons introduced Oscar Orange and the letter Oo. Lessons 53 and 54 introduced Oscar Orange, while Oscar’s Bothersome Brother was also introduced in lesson 53. Lesson 55 and 56 discussed Mr. O, the oldest man in Letterland and the long sound of o. Assessment: Began to update portions of K-2 literacy assessment.

Week Seventeen – (Letterland Lessons 57-60) Peter Puppy and the letter Pp and sound were introduced in lesson 57-58. Lesson 59 focused again on segmenting through live spelling and slow-speak dictation. Lesson 60 reviewed the letter sounds of g, p and o.Assessment: Continued to update portions of K-2 literacy assessment.

Week Eighteen– (Letterland Lessons 61-64) Eddie Elephant and the letter Ee and sound were introduced in Lessons 61 and 62. Mr. E, the Easy Magic Man and the long e sound was introduced in lesson 63 and 64. Assessment: Continue to update portions of K-2 literacy assessment.

Week Nineteen - (Letterland Lessons 65- 69) Lesson 65 consisted of a review of blending and segmenting sounds through an activity and chalkboard spelling. Lesson 66 and 67 introduced Uppy Umbrella and her letter sound. Mr U, the umbrella man, was introduced in lessons 68 and 69, along with his long sound. Assessment: Began completing informal running records on students who were beginning to read independently as documented by the K-2 literacy assessment.

Week Twenty – (Letterland Lessons 70 -72) Kicking Kick and his sound were introduced in lessons 70 and 71. Lesson 72 consisted of a review of e, k, and u.

Week Twenty-One– (Lessons 73 and 74) Lesson 73 focused on the diagraph ck and Lesson 74 focused on diagraph ng sounds. Based on Formative Assessment, the students needed two days of instruction with each of these diagraphs. Therefore, additional teacher selected activities, such as flip books with each diagraph, were employed.

Week Twenty-two– (Letterland Lessons 75 and 76) Lesson 75 focused on diagraph sh and lesson 76 focused on diagraph ch. As stated above, based on formative assessment additional activities were employed. Again students were asked to make flip books with each diagraph. Assessment: Completed spelling portion of K-2 literacy assessment.

Week Twenty-three– (Lessons 77 and 78) Lesson 77 focused on the voiced and unvoiced sound of the diagraph th. The students definitely needed additional instruction in understanding this concept. Lesson 78 consisted of review all of the diagraphs taught. Assessment: Final informal running records collected for students who were beginning to read independently.

**Summary**

The problem addressed within the study was that students consistently entered first grade without the appropriate phonological skills necessary to read and write independently. The purpose of the study was to incorporate a child friendly synthetic phonics program within a kindergarten classroom that would increase the student’s phonological skills and assist them in being better prepared for first grade. The phonics program incorporated in the kindergarten classroom was Letterland. The Letterland program focused on teaching the letter sounds first by having a Letterland character represent the letter sound. The letter sounds are taught within a systematic and sequential order. In order to complete the study, the researcher followed the sequence and lesson plans provided in the Letterland teacher manual. Formal and informal assessments and observations provided the researcher with the necessary data to determine the effectiveness of the Letterland program.

**Chapter 4 – Data Analysis**

**Overview**

The primary goal, of this study was to determine the effects of a child friendly synthetic phonics program, Letterland, within a kindergarten classroom. The researcher’s interest in the study was sparked by the continuous emphasis placed on the program within the local school system. The researcher needed to determine if the synthetic phonics approach and the Letterland program were an effective manner in which to teach students letter recognition and sounds, along with the skills needed to read and write on grade level by the time the students exit kindergarten. The main purpose or goal of the study was to determine if incorporating a synthetic phonics program such as Letterland within the kindergarten classroom would increase the students’ ability to learn the letter sounds and names at a faster rate. After learning the letter names and sounds, would the students be able to use these skills to read and write more effectively before leaving kindergarten? Within this chapter the results of the study will be reported and a summary given.

**Report of Results**

The results from the K-2 literacy assessment given during the first week of school provided the data to develop a baseline. The total raw score for the number of upper and lower case letters named was 52. The baseline data showed that four students could name 24% or less of the upper and lower case letters, zero students fell within the 25% -49% range, four students were within 50-74% and four additional students were within 76-100%. A baseline score was also gathered for the number of letter sounds the students could provide. All twelve students had scores at 24% or below in their ability to state the letter sounds at the beginning of the year assessment. (See Figure 2.1)

Before the end of the second nine weeks of school, during January 2012, the students were assessed again on letter recognition and their ability to produce the letter sounds with the K-2 Literacy Assessment. The assessment data showed that 83% of the students recognized at least 75% or more of their upper and lower case letters, while one student’s score fell within the 50%-74% range and one student was within the 25%-49% range. The assessment of the students’ ability to produce letter sounds when shown a letter demonstrated that all twelve students were able to produce at least 75% or more of the letter sounds. Figure 4.1and Figure 4.2 below demonstrated the high growth in these areas.



Figure 4.1. The graph represents the number of students within a particular percentage range that could recognize the upper and lower case letters when given the Letter/Sound portion of the K-2 Literacy Assessment during the second nine weeks. The percentile range is based on how many upper and lower case letters were named correctly. Therefore, the total raw score would be fifty-two. The percentile ranges are as followed: Raw score of 39-52 would be in the 75%-100% range, a raw score of 26-38 would be in the 50%-74% range, a raw score of 13-25 would be within the 25%-49% range and a raw score of 0-12 would be within the 0%-24% range.



Figure 4.2. The graph represents the number of students within a particular percentage range that could produce the letter sounds when given the Letter/Sound portion of the K-2 Literacy Assessment during the second nine weeks. This graph demonstrates that all twelve students have mastered the ability to produce letter sounds. The students scored a raw score of 20-26 which places each of them in the 75%-100% percentile range.

Before the end of the second nine weeks, in January, 2012 and at the mid-year juncture, data was also collected from the K-2 Literacy Assessment in the areas of phonemic awareness and reading level. The phonemic awareness section included the following tasks: orally recognizes rhyme, orally generates rhyme, orally divides words into syllables, blending onset and rime, segmenting onset and rime, orally identifies beginning sounds, orally identifies words that begin the same, orally identifies ending sound, orally identifies words that end the same, orally blends phonemes into words, and orally segments words into phonemes. On each of the individual tasks, the students were given six attempts which allowed them to score a raw score of six on a given section. Eleven individual tasks were assessed, allowing each student the opportunity to score a raw score of 66. Data from the phonemic awareness section demonstrated that the students fell within one of four ranges. One student had a raw score of 15, which placed the student in the group that scored 24% or below on items correct. One additional student had a raw score of 22 and fell within the group that scored 25%-49% on items correct. Five students had raw scores of 33, 47, 40, 33, and 42 which placed them within the 50%-74% range for correct answers. Five additional students had raw scores of 64, 59, 61, 52, 53, which placed them in the group that scored 75% or higher on correct answers. This data is documented below in figure 4. 3.



Figure 4.3. The graph represents the number of students who were within a particular percentage range for the area of Phonemic Awareness when given the K-2 Literacy Assessment. The phonemic awareness section includes tasks that assess rhyming words, syllables, blending onset and rime, segmenting onset and rime, beginning sounds, ending sounds and blending sounds into words and segmenting words into phonemes. The raw scores that fell within each percentile range are as follows: a raw score of 0-16 – 0%-24%, a raw score of 17-32 – 25%-49%, a raw score of 33-49 – 50%-74% and a raw score of 50-66 is 75%-100%.

The K-2 Literacy Assessment also provided a means to assess a student’s reading level. Running records were completed on books that are specifically designated to be used with the literacy assessment kit. The running records were used to determine the accuracy of the student’s ability to read the text. Students were identified as non-readers if they are not able to read the first book, Level A, with 90% accuracy. Students were expected to start at Level A and read that text and each book thereafter at 90% accuracy in order to be considered an independent reader at that level. Kindergarten students were expected to read a level C text by the end of their kindergarten year. Based on the data collected at the mid-year juncture, five students were non-readers, two students read the Level A book, two students read the Level B book and three students read the Level C book.



Figure 4.4. The reading levels of the students based on data collected from the K-2 Literacy Assessment at the end of the second nine weeks are represented in the graph.

Informal running records were kept for a month to determine the growth of each student’s reading ability. Running records were only kept on the students that were able to read based on the K-2 literacy assessment. The running record was completed for books read with the teacher for that week. The researcher was only able to keep a few weeks of informal running records due to the fact that the mid-year K-2 Literacy Assessment had to be completed first in order to have baseline data. The expectation for informal running records was the same as with the K-2 Literacy Assessment. Students were expected to read the books at 90% accuracy. The set of books that were used for reading instruction within the classroom were categorized by the county’s literacy specialists to coincide with the reading levels of the literacy assessment. Therefore, based on the informal running records completed, all three students who were reading on a level C in early January were reading on a level E by mid-February. The two students who were reading on a level B in mid-January were able to read at a Level C by mid- February**.** Two additional students who were reading level A books in mid January were able to read a level B book by mid-February. Finally, one student who was a non-reader in mid January based on the K-2 Literacy Assessment was able to read a level B by mid February. Four students who were non-readers in mid-January were still non-readers at the end of the study.



Figure 4.5. The graph represents the growth of the student’s reading level within a month based on data collected from the K-2 Literacy Assessment in January, 2012 and data collected from informal running records collected in February, 2012.

The final component of the K-2 Literacy Assessment that was completed was the spelling portion. Assessment data from this section, along with the writing conference sheets, allowed the researcher to determine if the Letterland program was having a positive effect on the students’ ability to sound out and segment words to write. With the exception of one student, all students were using beginning sounds in their writing as demonstrated through the spelling assessment as well as comments recorded on the writing conference sheets. Here again, all but one student demonstrated an ability to use ending sounds on the spelling assessment, while also incorporating ending sounds within their story writing. Six out of the twelve students were able to write the short vowel sound consistently in words on the spelling assessment, while five of the other students were only partially able to spell words correctly with the short vowel sound in the middle. Two students were not able to write the vowel sound in the middle of the words on the spelling assessment. Out of the six students who could write the correct vowel sound on the spelling assessment, only three consistently demonstrated the ability to write vowel sounds in words when writing stories as documented on the writing conference sheets.



Figure 4.6. Representation of the sounds the students are able to recognize and write from spelling samples taken from the K-2 Literacy Assessment.

Finally, the researcher conducted interviews with the students to determine their views of the Letterland program. When all twelve students were shown a page of random upper and lowercase letters, they could state they were indeed letters. Eleven out of the twelve students could state an appropriate purpose for using the letters. One student, however, stated an incorrect purpose for the letters, “you count them”. The majority of the students could name all but one of the Letterland characters. Only one student was unable to name several of the characters. Seven students misnamed the Letterland character for either the letter p or the letter q. All of the students had a favorite Letterland character and were able to state a reason why they enjoyed the Letterland characters.

**Summary**

Data was collected within a kindergarten classroom in order to determine the effects of a synthetic phonics program, Letterland, on the students’ ability to learn letter names and sounds and the rate at which the students acquire these skills. Data was also collected to determine if the Letterland approach to teaching phonics also increased the students’ ability to read and write more efficiently and effectively. The K-2 Literacy Assessment, informal running records, student writing samples and an interview with the students provided data which was used within this study. Data was collected during the first week of school through the middle of the third nine weeks.

**Chapter 5 – Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications for Future Research**

**Overview**

An action research study was completed in a single kindergarten classroom in a public school. The study researched the effects of a child friendly synthetic phonics program, Letterland, within a kindergarten classroom. Interest in the study was sparked by the continuous emphasis placed on the program within the local school system. The Letterland program teaches letter sounds and letter names in an opposite manner to the previous phonics program used in the classroom. With such emphasis being placed on the Letterland program and the synthetic phonics approach, the researcher wanted to study the effects of the Letterland program within the classroom and on student growth.

The main goal of the study was to determine if incorporating a synthetic phonics program such as Letterland in the kindergarten classroom would increase the students’ ability to learn the letter sounds and letter names at a faster rate, while assisting the students in using these skills to read and write more effectively before leaving kindergarten. Based on previous research completed, the expectation was that the results would be favorable and demonstrate that the Letterland program was a more effective means of teaching phonics to young children. Since the Letterland program encourages the imagination of young children and increases their interest and excitement for learning, the expectation was the students would learn at a faster rate. Also, since the letters have greater meaning because they are linked to characters, the expectation was that the students would be able to use the letter sounds to read and write more effectively.

Within the chapter is a discussion of the conclusions based on results, recommendations based on results, implications for future research, and a summary.

**Conclusions from Results**

The researcher concluded, based on the study, that the Letterland program does increase the students’ ability to master letter sounds and letter names. The majority of the students in the study are blending and segmenting letter sounds in order to read and write at grade level expectations. The data collected during this study supports these statements. Although, the majority of students, 66%, did begin kindergarten with some knowledge of letter names, none of the students had knowledge of the letter sounds. However, by the end of the second nine weeks, halfway through the school year, ten of the students could recognize the majority of the upper and lowercase letters. The two students who had not reached the goal of recognizing the majority of the letters had improved from the beginning of the year. One student began recognizing 1% of the upper and lower case letters and at the end of the second nine weeks was recognizing 49% of the letters. The second student who has not mastered the goal could only recognize 3% of the upper and lowercase letters at the beginning of the year and at the end of the second nine weeks could recognize 69% of the letters. The greatest area of growth overall for all the students was seen in the area of letter sounds. All twelve of the students were able to produce a letter sound when given a letter in random order. This data represents a 100% amount of growth for all students. At the beginning of school none of the twelve students could produce more than six sounds. However, at mid year in kindergarten, all of the students are able to produce at least 20 or more letter sounds.

Based on these results, the Letterland phonics program does appear to have a positive effect on teaching students’ letter sounds and letter names. Therefore, the data collected demonstrates that the Letterland program did increase the rate that the students learn the letter names and letter sounds since the majority of the students had mastered both skills at the midpoint of their kindergarten year. The Letterland program made a tremendous impact on the rate in which the students learned letter names and sounds. The students’ ability to learn the letter sounds was impacted the most by the Letterland program which is indicative of a synthetic phonics approach. Students primarily exposed to letter sounds learn the sounds more quickly than letter names. The goal of learning sounds first is to better equip the students with the skills to read and write more effectively.

Data collected during the study did support the increased rate in which students learned their letter names and letter sounds and improved their ability to apply letter sounds to read and write at an expected level for a kindergarten student. Based on the results from the Phonemic Awareness section of the K-2 Literacy Assessment, 42% of the students had a firm foundation of phonemic awareness skills, while 42% of the students were developing these skills and two other students still needed additional assistance in this area. The real growth can be seen in the reading levels of the students. Fifty-eight percent of the students were reading at or above the expected levels for a kindergarten student based on the K-2 Literacy Assessment data collected in January, 2012. By the end of the study, 67% of the students were reading at an expected level based on informal running records collected by the researcher. All of these students showed growth on the informal running records by increasing their reading level to a Level B, C, or E. Although, 67% of students being on or above grade level did not reflect overall growth higher than what was documented in the School Improvement Plan (Anonymous, 2011); it is important to note that the data only reflects the growth for half a year. The students still have the opportunity to improve and raise the percentage of students on or above grade level by the end of the year.

Finally, the students’ writing ability was assessed with the spelling portion of the K-2 Literacy Assessment and through documentation on a writing conference sheet. Ten of the students on the spelling portion of the K-2 Literacy Assessment scored the maximum score on either being able to write initial sounds, final sounds, or both. Five students scored the maximum points in both initial and final sounds, while four students were within one point of scoring the maximum number of points in both areas. One student scored the maximum points in initial sounds, while scoring two points less on final sounds. Another student scored five out of seven points on both initial and final sounds. One additional student scored only one point on both initial and final sounds, thus demonstrating this student was not able to segment sounds to write words. The students’ ability to incorporate medial sounds within words varies. Three students scored six out of seven points in the medial sound area, while three other students scored five out of seven points and two students scored four out of seven points in this area. These students’ scores demonstrate that they are beginning to be able to segment words to write medial sounds. The remaining students were not able to consistently use medial sounds within their writing. The writing conference sheet that the researcher employed to document the use of initial, medial and final sounds within the students’ writing, supports the results from the spelling section.

Based on the data collected in the areas of reading and writing, the researcher concluded that the Letterland program did have a positive impact on the students’ ability to read and write. However, the correlation between the positive impact the Letterland program had on the students’ ability to read versus writing appeared higher. A greater majority of students, 67%, are reading on a level expected for a kindergarten student than being able to write incorporating the letter sounds. Only 50% of the students are consistently incorporating medial sounds in isolation on the spelling assessment, while out of that 50%, only 25% are incorporating the sounds within their own writing.

The student interviews revealed that the students do enjoy the Letterland program. Eleven of the twelve students could name the majority of the Letterland characters by name. The characters that most confused the students were the characters for the letter p or letter q. At the time of the study, the teacher had not taught the letter q, which could partially explain some of the confusion. All but two students could state an appropriate reason why it was important to know the letters. Many of the students referred to the Letterland characters songs or the fact that the characters were “funny” as a primary reason for what they enjoyed about the program. All the students could name their favorite Letterland character. This information allowed the researcher to determine that the Letterland program made an impact on the students. The students’ description of the characters demonstrated the enjoyment the students have for the program. Not only did the students enjoy the program, but the students understood that letters have meaning and letters and sounds are important for making words in order to read and write.

**Recommendations based on Results**

Based on these results, the researcher supports the Letterland program as being an integral component of phonics instruction within a kindergarten classroom. The growth documented by the students encourages the use of the program within the classroom. It is important to note that the researcher followed the recommendations within the teaching manual and the instructions were varied at a minimum. If the Letterland teaching manual is followed to fidelity then teachers can expect to see the same accelerated growth within their classrooms. If the Letterland program is not taught to fidelity, then the overall results of student learning may not be as positive. Therefore, this researcher encourages all teachers and administrators to consider incorporating this program within their kindergarten classrooms. The child-friendly approach of the Letterland program allows for learning to be exciting, fun and meaningful for the students. Thus, the students retain the knowledge of the letter names and sounds at a faster rate, which increases their ability to read and write more efficiently.

**Implications for Future Research**

One portion of the Letterland program that this researcher did not incorporate was the assessments that are throughout the program. Throughout the study, there were two students who struggled to learn the various skills. Many times throughout the study, the researcher reflected on incorporating the Letterland assessments into instruction. The researcher questioned if incorporating the Letterland assessments would assist in planning more appropriately for the instructional needs of these students. Including the Letterland assessments within instruction and allowing the assessments to guide the individual instruction for struggling students would be the next step for this researcher.

A follow up study into the retention of the information over summer break would provide additional information into the effectiveness of the Letterland program. If the students retain the information at a higher rate than previous years, one could conclude that the Letterland program is definitely an effective means of teaching phonics to young children. It would also be important to research all kindergarten teachers within a single school to discover the growth when incorporating the Letterland program within their classrooms. Completing this type of study would rule out an individual teacher’s effectiveness and support of the Letterland program as being the sole contributing factor into the growth of the students.

**Summary**

In summary, the problem addressed through this study focused on the fact that students consistently entered first grade without the appropriate phonological awareness skills that are necessary to read and write independently. The purpose of the study was to incorporate a child-friendly synthetic phonics program, Letterland, within a kindergarten classroom. The goal of the study was to research, whether the Letterland program when used to fidelity, would increase the students’ ability to master letter sounds and letter names and their ability to blend and segment sounds to apply these skills to their reading and writing. The data collected during the study did support the use of the Letterland program as an effective means of teaching phonics instruction. All students demonstrated growth in recognizing their letter names and sounds and their ability to learn these skills at a faster rate. The majority of the students, 66%, at the end of the study were performing on grade level expectations in the area of reading. Half of the students were performing on grade level expectations in the area of writing. Through the use of characters for each of the letters of the alphabet, the Letterland program brings the alphabet to life for the students and makes learning the letter names and sounds a fun and exciting experience that continues to impact their reading and writing.

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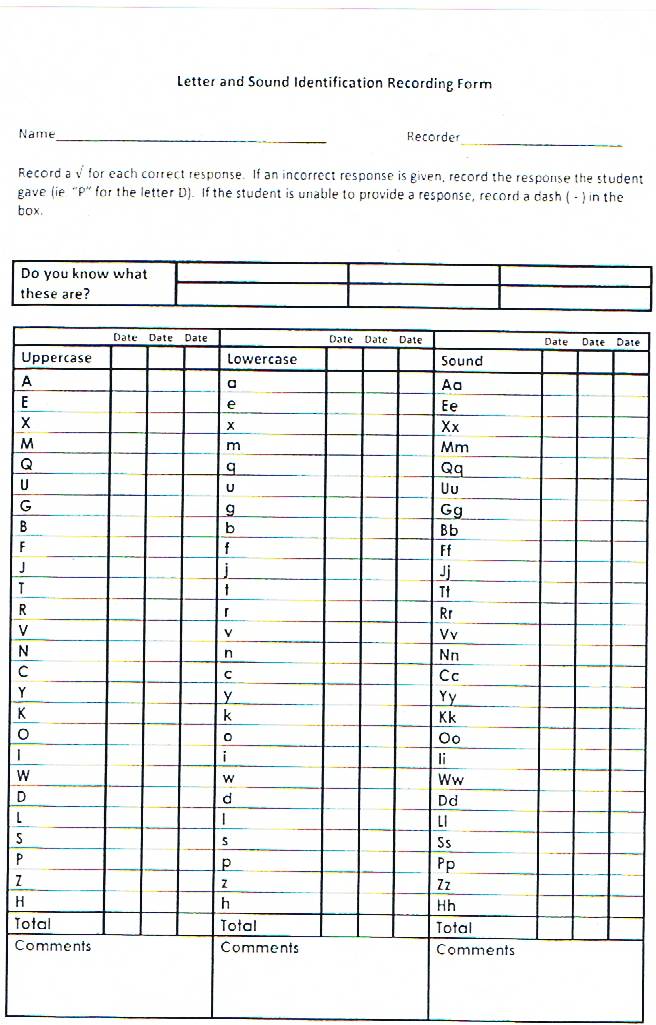
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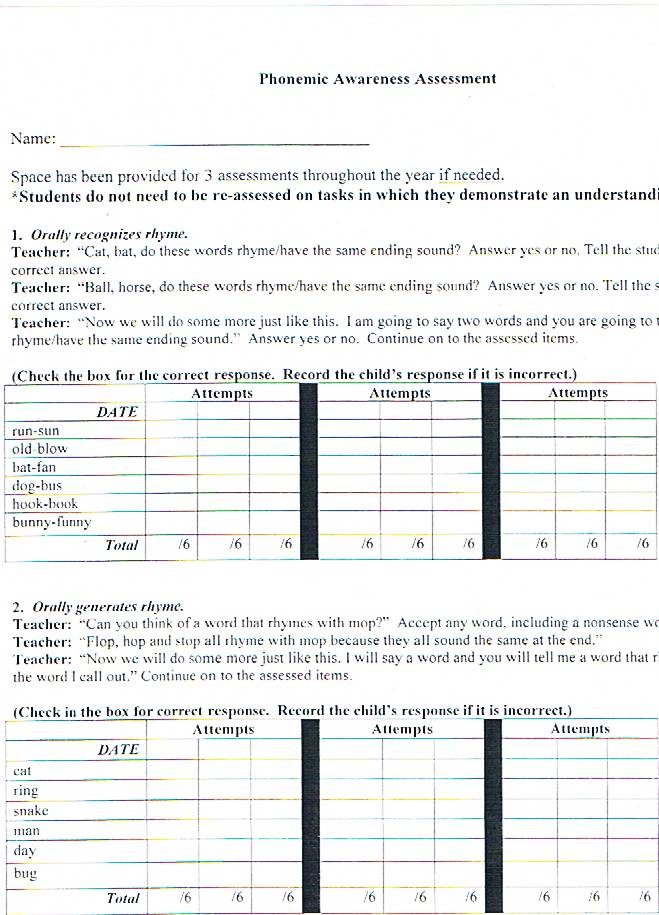
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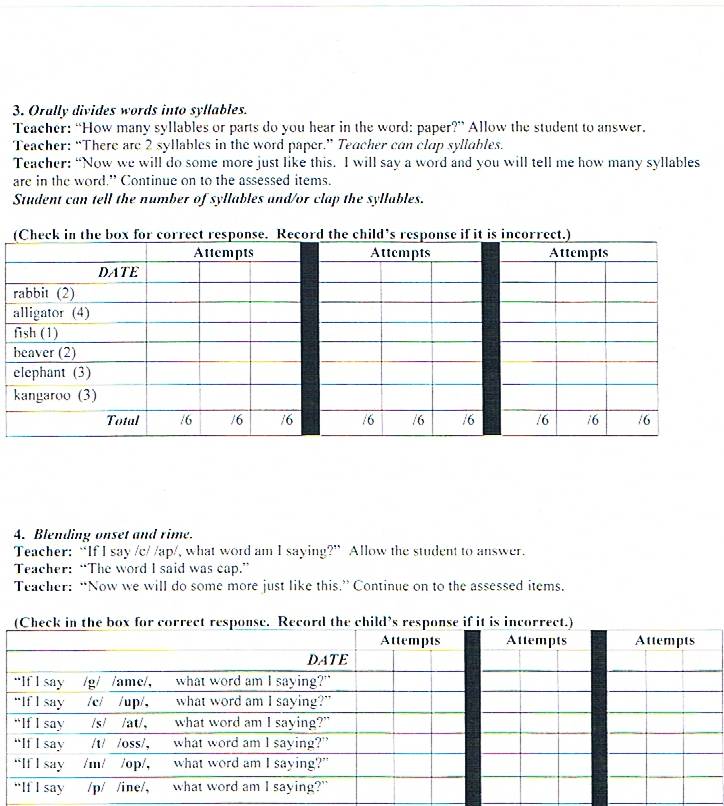
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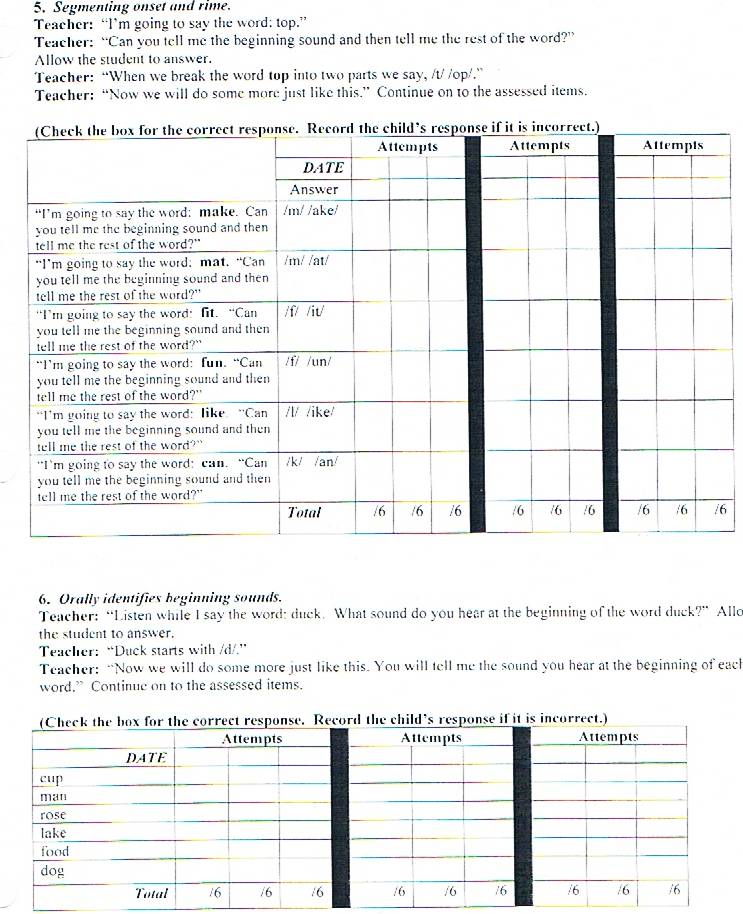
Appendix A

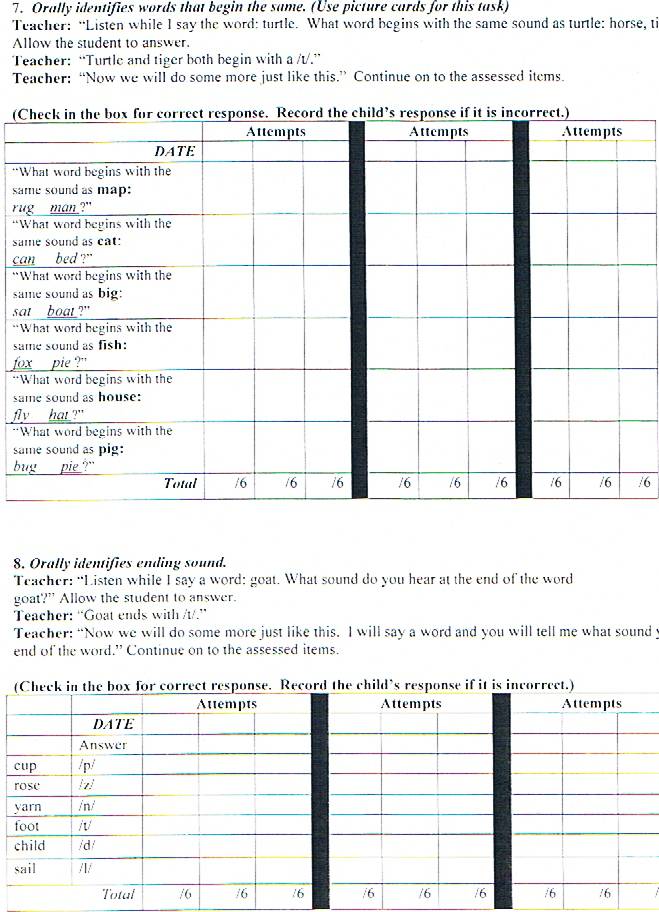
K- 2 Literacy Assessment

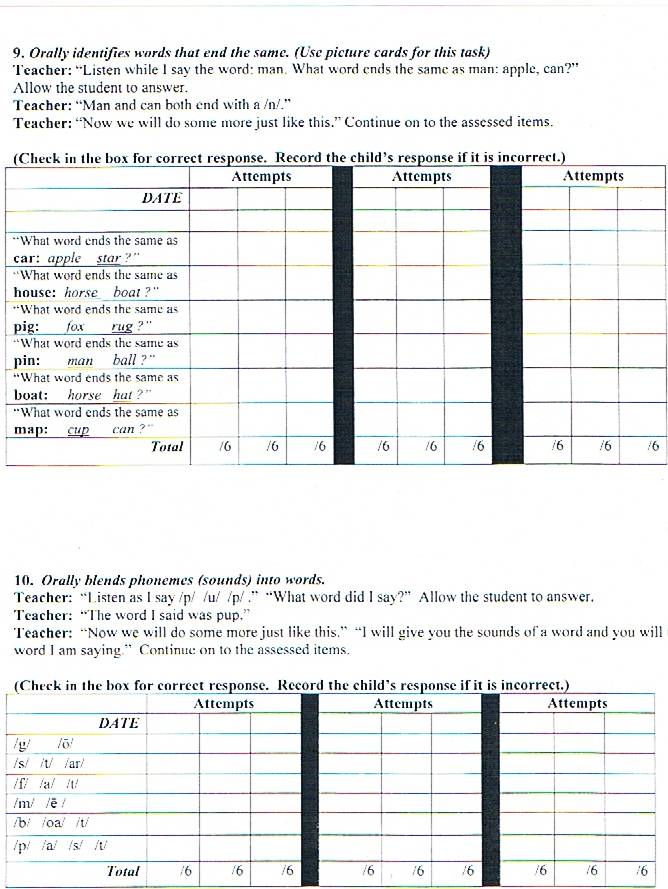


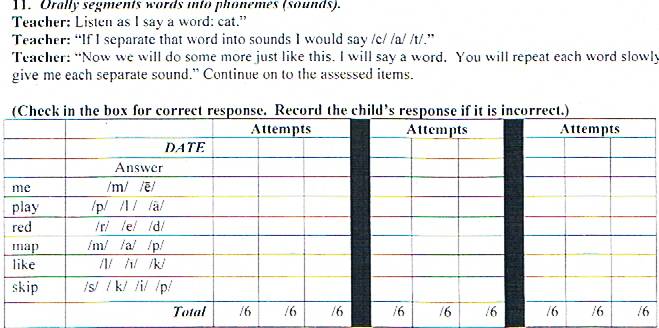


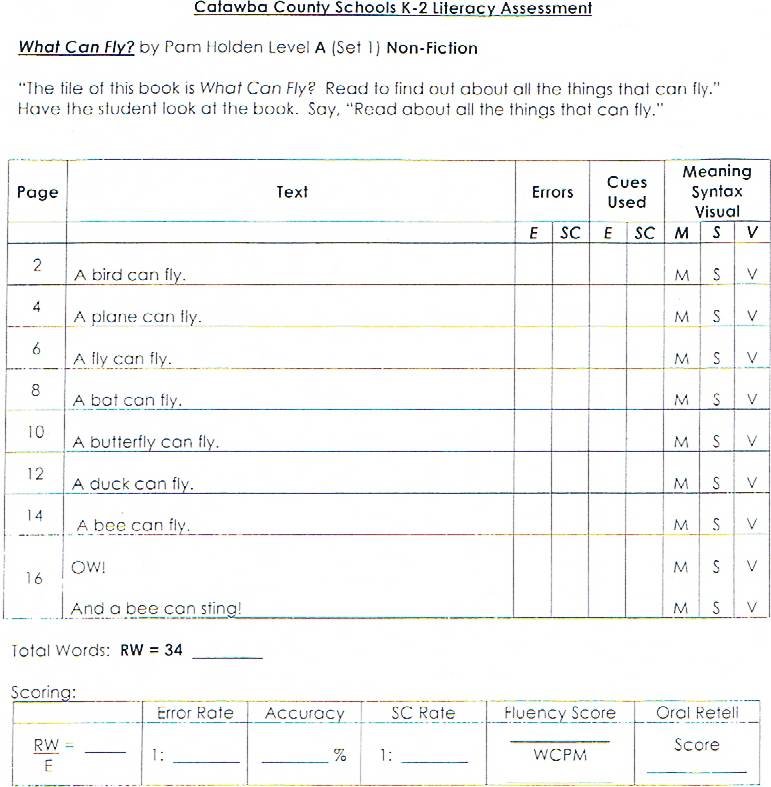


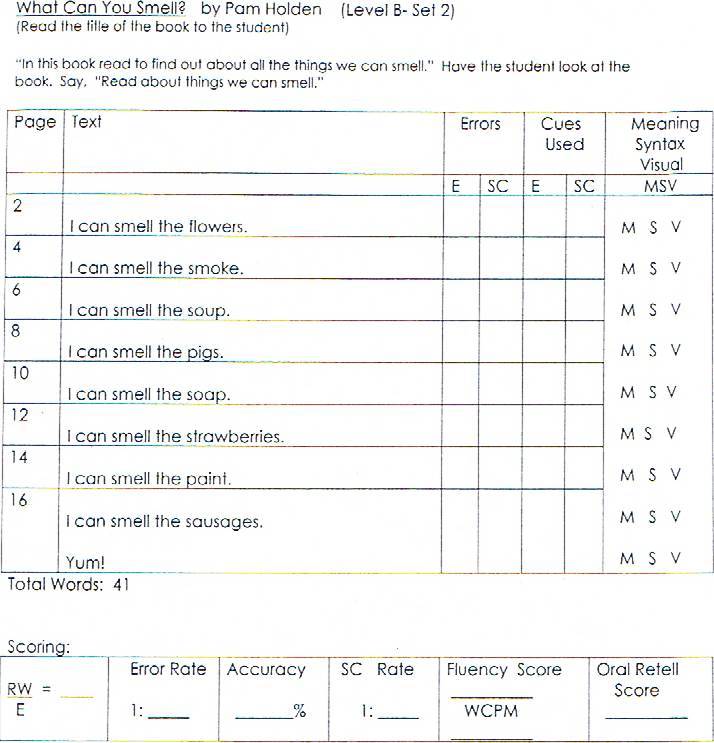


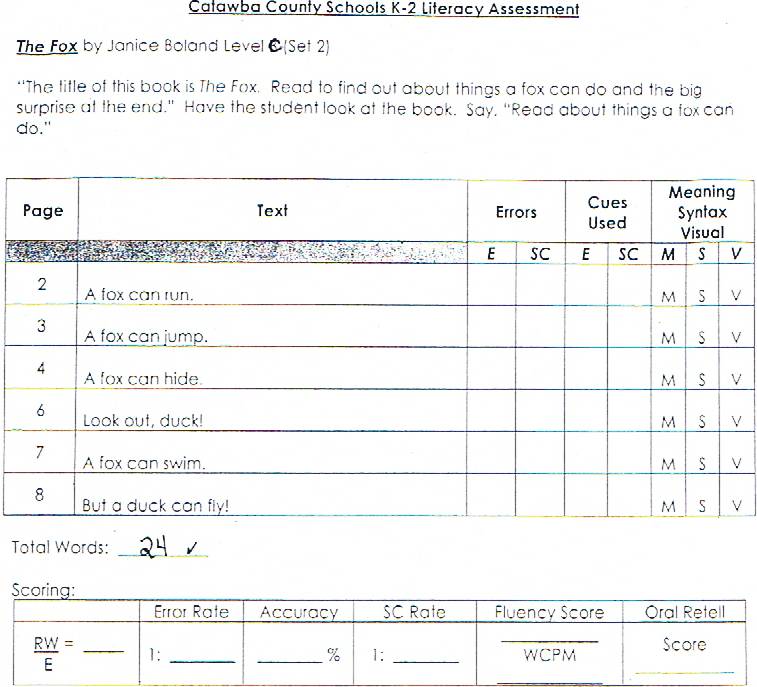


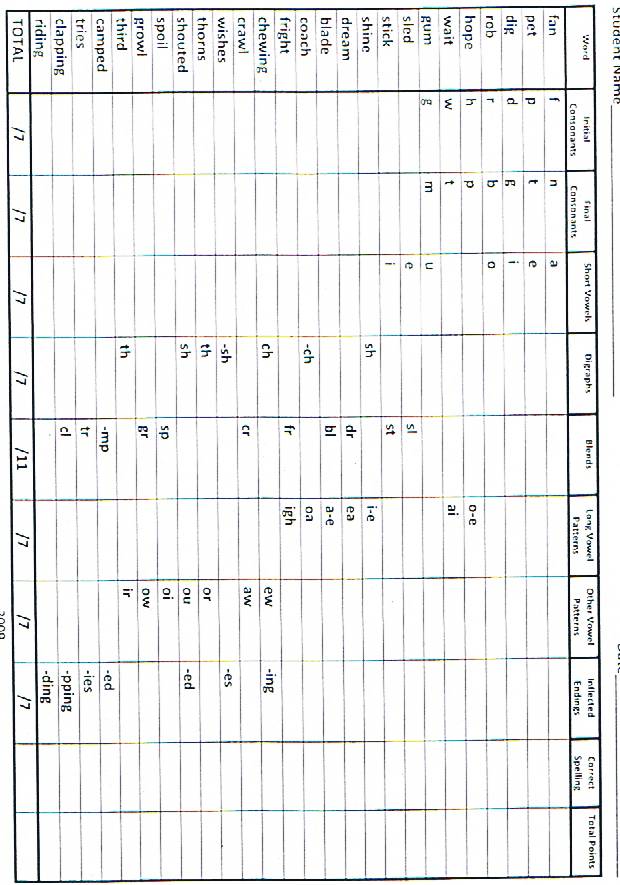
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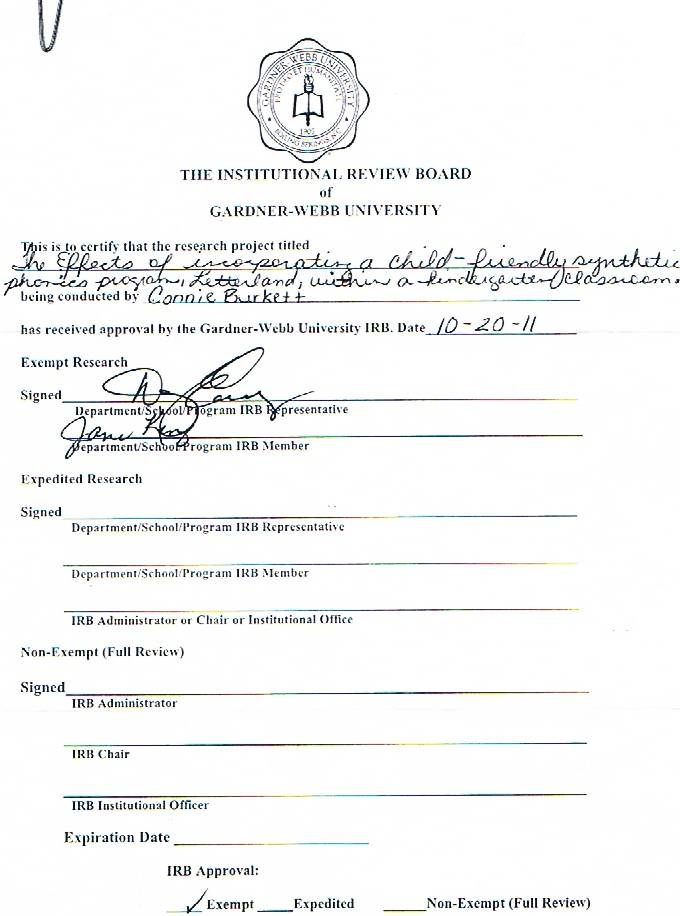
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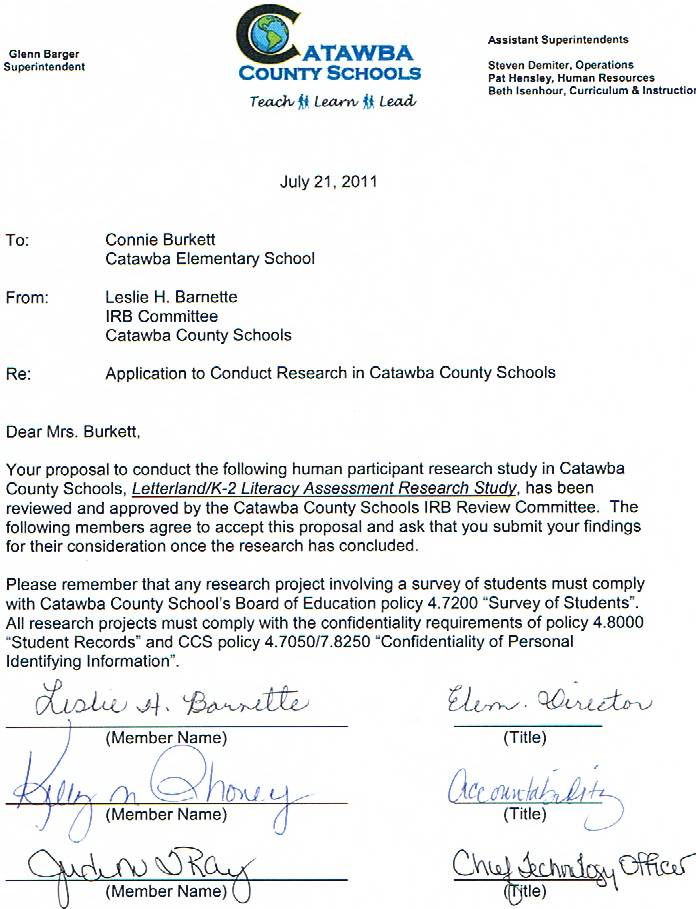
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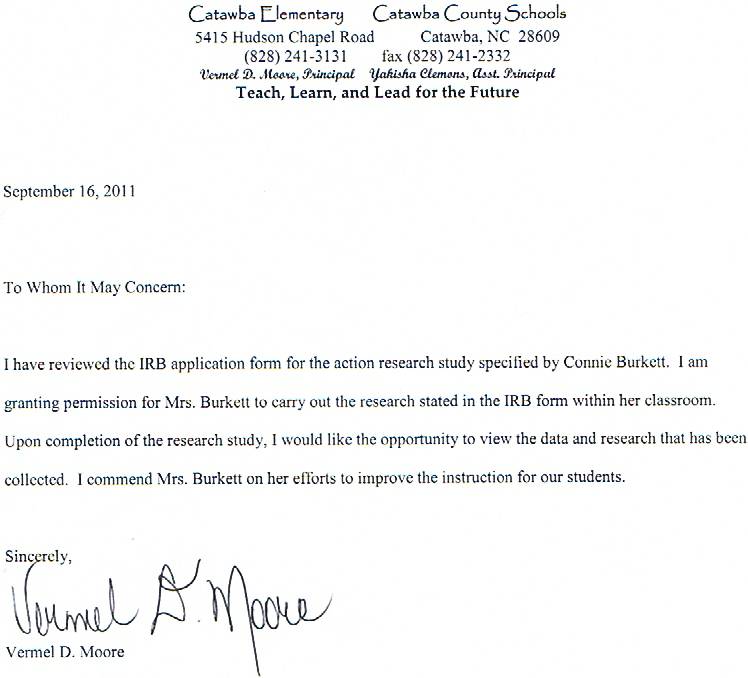
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Appendix B

IRB Documentation







Informed Consent Form

August 30th, 2011

Dear Parents,

I am currently enrolled in the graduate program at Gardner Webb University. One of the requirements is to complete an action research study. Therefore, I will be conducting a study in my classroom to determine the effects of a child-friendly synthetic phonics program. The program I am incorporating is the Letterland program. I am writing to ask permission to use the data I collect from your child during this process. Participation is this study involves only regular classroom activities. You may contact me at any time regarding your child’s participation. The principal of the school has approved this study.

The purpose of this study is to observe the effects of the Letterland phonics program on preparing the students to read and write. The study will take place at XXXXXX Elementary School during the 2011-2012 school year. I will complete the study through normal phonics instruction. During the study, I will collect various forms of data to determine whether the Letterland program was more successful in preparing students to read and write. Possible types of data I will collect include RTI data, K-2 literacy assessment, samples of student’s work, observations and interviews.

Only I will have access to the data collected in the study. Your child’s participation in this project is strictly confidential. Only I will have access to your child’s identity and to the information that can be associated to your child’s identity.

Use of your child’s data is voluntary. **Please complete the form below and return it to me by Friday, September 2nd.** If at any time you wish for me not to include your child’s data, please send me a written notice.

If you want to know more about this research project, please contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or email me at . This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University. Information on Gardner-Webb University’s policy and procedure for research involving humans can be obtained from Dr. Doug Eury at Gardner-Webb University.

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Thank you for cooperation. Again, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mrs. XXXXXXX

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Please check your decision, sign, and return the form to school by Friday, September 2nd.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I give Mrs. XXXXXXX permission to use my child’s data within her study.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give Mrs. XXXXXXX permission to use my child’s data within her study.

Child’s name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

Writing Conference Sheet

**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

What was discussed during the conference? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Strengths \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Weaknesses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

What was discussed during the conference? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Strengths \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Weaknesses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

What was discussed during the conference? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Strengths \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Weaknesses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix D

Interview Questions and Student Responses

**Interview Questions for Research Study**

1. (A sheet of random upper and lowercase letters is shown to the students.)

What are these?

1. Why do we need them?
2. (Looking at the sheet.) Can you name the Letterland characters for each letter?
3. What do you like about the Letterland characters?
4. Who is your favorite Letterland character?

**Student Responses to interview questions**

Student One:

1. letters

2. For names

3. Named all letterland characters

4. They help us know stuff.

5. Sammy Snake

Student Two:

1. letters

2. words

3. Named all but Quarrelsome Queen; called the letter Peter Puppy

4. They make sounds in words and make lots of words.

5. Kicking King

Student Three:

1. letters

2. Count them

3. Named all but Quarrelsome Queen; called the letter Peter Puppy

4. Them good and sing

5. Annie Apple

Student Four:

1. abc’s

2. Help you learn abc’s

3. Named all but Quarrelsome Queen and Lucy Lamplight

4. Like to see them

5. Impy Ink

Student Five:

1. letters

2. To count your abc’s

3. Named all the Letterland characters

4. They are funny.

5. Sammy Snake

Student Six:

1. letters

2. To learn who the Letterland characters are

3. Named all but Peter Puppy; called letter Quarrelsome Queen

4. I learn all of them; good for you to learn

5. Vicky Violet

Student Seven:

1. alphabet

2. So we can spell words.

3. Named all but Peter Puppy; called letter Quarrelsome Queen

4. They talk.

5. Annie Apple

Student Eight:

1. letters

2. For beginning words and names

3. Named all but Peter Puppy; called letter Quarrelsome Queen

4. Make sounds

5. Annie Apple

Student Nine:

1. letters

2. To write

3. Named all but Peter Puppy; called letter Quarrelsome Queen. Did name vowel men for a, e and i.

4. songs

5. Mr. A

Student Ten:

1. letters

2. Help you sound out

3. Named all but Peter Puppy; called letter Quarrelsome Queen

4. songs

5. Bouncy Ben

Student Eleven:

1. abc’s

2. To know our abc’s

3. Named all but Quarrelsome Queen; called letter Peter Puppy. Also did not know ZigZag Zebra

4. They are funny.

5. Red Robot

Student Twelve:

1. letters

2. Because it is for Letterland

3. Did not name the Letterland character for the letters x,e,q,u, b,o, i, and d.

4. In my name; music

5. Annie Apple